

Wrestling Perspective

• Analysis & Commentary From The McLaughlin Group of Professional Wrestling •

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PO Box 401

Camillus, NY 13031-0401

Volume II § Issue 9

December 1991

Flair vs. Hogan: Is It Live?

By - Paul MacArthur

Anticipation is often half the fun of anything special. When I heard the Ric Flair vs. Hulk Hogan match was going to be at Madison Square Garden Thanksgiving weekend, it didn't take long to decide I was going to make a trip to see history. The two most dominate wrestlers of the eighties were going to meet and I had the opportunity to see it. I thought about it for most of the five hour drive to Long Island and our gang of four discussed it on the train into the Big Apple. Finally, we had the chance to see a seven year dream match come true. We were not disappointed.

We arrived late and by the time we sat down, Flair's music started playing. The aura. The electricity. The heat. The intensity. The excitement. It was all there and then some. Over 15,000 people went wild as Flair entered the ring just three days after causing Hogan to lose his title to the Undertaker. To call the crowd rabid would be euphemistic. It was the most heat I have ever seen or felt in my life and not for one second did it let up. From the time Flair walked that aisle to Hogan's final pose and limp back to the dressing room, the crowd was on fire with a blazing fury of cheers and jeers for Flair and for Hogan. My friends, who have attended MSG events in the past, said they had never seen the Garden that crazy. It was alive. It was exciting. It was history.

For what seemed like 20 minutes, but in reality was barely even 10, Flair and Hogan gave the crowd nonstop action and the best main event the WWF has had in years. Hogan is not Ricky Steamboat and no one naively thought they were going to see a scientific display. No, no one expected that at all. We expected action and it never stopped. We expected tremendous excitement. We got more than our share. We expected heat. We should have been wearing swim suits. We hoped for memories of a classic confrontation. We'll have them for life.

While this match may not have been a technical showcase, there were many elements that elevated it to a four star match, even if Hogan is no longer capable of working a solid bout: the sheer joy of watching Flair perform, the anger when Hogan wouldn't sell some of Flair's signature moves, the blonde in the front row, Flair's patented bump over the top rope, Hogan selling the figure four, Whoooo! the brawling, face first bumps, charisma, outside interference, that chop, the crowd, the cheers for Hogan, the cheers for Flair, the boos for Flair, watching Flair pin Hogan one, two, three, the expectation of the reversed decision, the chanting of a certain expletive at the reversal. It was all there. A technical masterpiece? No. But this match involved Hogan, not Jushin Liger, or even Butch Reed. Instead it was a dream match come true and all the elements of a classic were there.

Rarely does reality meet our expectations when it something we dream about. Often, not only is anticipation not just part of what we enjoy, but the only thing we enjoy. Disappointments are many in life. Wrestling is no exception. Flair vs. Hogan had many

expectations. But no one seriously expected Flair vs. Steamboat. Instead they expected drama and the best performance Hogan was capable of giving. It was there; ten fold. While I've heard different reports about the match on tape, I have yet to see it. Some felt it was good, others disappointing. All agreed that the magic of the evening wasn't captured on videotape. It's kind of like seeing certain musicians live and seeing a taped broadcast. Sometimes it helps, but often, the intimacy and the aura is lost. That is a shame. Forty, fifty, and even sixty, years from now, when we all have a little gray around the temples, we'll be arguing about wrestling and what we saw and what we liked and who was the greatest this and who did the best that and what was memorable and what really, using that colloquial term we all know and love, sucked, and how old Flair really was when he came to the WWF and did Terry Funk really do that and how many times did Terry Gordy piledrive Ted DiBiase in the Techwood Drive studio and of course it will never end. When those days come around, and they will all too quickly, I'll talk about Flair vs. Hogan at the Garden with reverence. Regrettably, those who weren't there will never fully understand why.

Or Is It Memorex?

By - David Skolnick

When Paul first told me he was going to see Ric Flair vs. Hulk Hogan at Madison Square Garden on November 30, I was sure he was going to be experiencing a memorable moment. By his account, he did. He said the atmosphere at the Garden was incredible and the crowd was very into the match. But when I watched the match cablecasted the following day on Madison Square Garden Network, my impressions were quite different than his. Yes, it was a very good match and probably one of the better WWF bouts I've seen in the past few months. The mere fact that it is a dream match fans have wanted to see for the past seven years ensured the bout was going to be enjoyable. But it was hardly an all time classic.

This was my first opportunity to see the Flair/Hogan matchup and I was looking forward to a better bout than the one I saw. Flair is incredible and works so hard that any match he's involved in is watchable and usually enjoyable. However, unlike many of Flair's other rivals including Harley Race, Terry Funk, Terry Allen, Ricky Steamboat and Barry Windham, who pride themselves on being great workers, the same cannot be said for Hogan, known primarily as an average worker at best.

The Hogan match was more than watchable and probably one of his best in a few years, but after the buildup, I was a little let down. After all, these were the two wrestlers who spent the better part of the eighties as their respective promotion's world champion. The match was over in less than 10 minutes. Whatever happened to giving the people their money's worth? When it was done, I thought not only was it rushed, but I was robbed out of seeing history. Although they'd worked with each other for a few weeks, their styles didn't mesh and they appeared to be going through the motions. Hogan hardly sold any of Flair's signature moves and looked like he was trying to show Flair up in front of the New York City crowd. Flair had to use every spot he has in his repertoire; the same ones he uses in a well-paced 30 to 45 minute match, not in 10 minutes. I'd watch a rematch between Flair and Hogan, but not with the anticipation I had before the Garden bout. To Hogan's credit, he worked a better match than Roddy Piper, who wrestled Flair a month earlier at the Garden and was, at best, embarrassing to watch.

The match did have its good points. Like Paul said, the crowd appeared to enjoy the confrontation and there were some good spots, but unfortunately, not enough. For instance, the ending to the match was no winner. There was obvious disappointment with the screw job finish that saw Hogan win on a reverse decision after Flair hit him with a

foreign object. This finish, which has been played out at dozens of other arenas, only supports what many people believe: Vince McMahon is never going to give Flair the respect he deserves. The ending was designed in order to set up a rematch between Flair and Hogan, but if people were not overly impressed with the original bout, they're not going to pay to see it again.

After only a few months, Flair has become little more than Hogan's latest challenger. Although he can work a lot better than any of the others, no longer is he perceived as the threat he was upon his debut. In many ways, he has become another Ted DiBiase. To hardcores, he's a great worker making a lot of money, but getting the shaft in the WWF. To others, he's a below average looking wrestler, when compared to the other WWF employees, who not only can't defeat Hogan, but calls himself a champion without beating anybody. Hopefully, the situation will improve, but it may have gone too far. Flair is seen by many fans as another bad guy who will eventually be the latest victim of the foot in the face/legdrop. Unfortunately, in a few months, that may be the case.

Sidelines

Thanks To Steve Beverly, Sheldon Goldberg, Wade Keller and Jeff Mullins for the plugs.

Next Issue will be a double issue featuring an in-depth interview with Billy Graham. If your label has a +1 on it, you'll need to send \$1.25 to receive our January issue. Everyone else will have their expiration date moved up one month with our January 1992 issue. If your subscription expires with this issue or you have a +1 on your label, renew today. This issue will be coming out as soon as possible.

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An Interview With Rockin' Robin Smith

Rockin' Robin Smith was the last recognized WWF ladies champion and currently holds the UWF version of the Women's World Championship. In this interview conducted by David Skolnick and Paul MacArthur on August 24, 1991, Robin discusses her stints in the WWF, All Japan and why she believes women's wrestling can make a successful return. Smith also discusses her famous wrestling family which includes Jake Roberts, Sam Houston and Grizzly Smith. Since this interview was conducted, Robin has worked for the LPWA and should have a bright future.

Wrestling Perspective: You come from a famous wrestling family. Is that how you started in the business?

Robin Smith: That's pretty much how I got into it. When the whole family does it; if your family's into carpentry, you become a carpenter. It was definitely a way in.

WP: Interesting childhood?

RS: Obviously it was colorful. I've had a real colorful childhood.

WP: So you broke in when? '87 or '88?

RS: I guess it was '87. The years go by and you go "ut-oh" once too many on the head.

WP: Who trained you?

RS: I was trained by a man named Nelson Royal in North Carolina.

WP: What was that like?

RS: It was fun. Actually what I had to do was, living close to New Orleans at the time, go up there and live with them, with their family, for three, four months. So every single day hitting the mats. There's a lot of schools around and you might go once or twice a week, but with him it was everyday. It was real intense training.

WP: You were referred to him by your father?

RS: Yes. He's an old family friend. He's an excellent teacher. We took it slow.

WP: How intense was the training with Nelson?

RS: Training everyday like that, you're in the best shape of your whole life. When you slow down a little bit, you tend not to keep up your regimen like you should. It was tough, but it was good for me.

WP: From there where did you go?

RS: I started out in Dallas with Wild West Wrestling. I would wrestle Debbie Combs or Susan Green. I had about four matches there and then went up to the WWF.

WP: They called you right away? What was it that attracted them to you after four matches?

RS: It wasn't so much that. I guess what it was, I went to a couple of the TV tapings for the WWF. Once they start seeing you somewhere, what happened was they needed an extra match. Actually, it was a real lucky break for me. They needed an extra match. They asked me if I had my gear. Of course you go everywhere with it. I said, "Yeah," and they put me in with Sherri for about five minutes.

WP: What was that like?

RS: Ooh! Heart attack. Headache.

WP: Between nerves and being in the ring?

RS: Oh yeah. You're afraid that everything is showing. But it turned out pretty well. So when I came out for my very first match, McMahon asked me how long I'd been wrestling. I said, "I've only had four matches." I think he was most impressed with the way I threw a punch over to Sherri. Everybody in the back thought I knocked her out.

WP: Out of all the people you worked with, who was the toughest?

RS: Definitely Sherri.

WP: It wasn't Madusa?

RS: Well, they're different, different styles. But Sherri, I guess the reason she's so intimidating because you never know what she's going to do. She's out there somewhere. She's way out there somewhere.

WP: The character she's portraying is close to her real personality?

RS: Oh definitely close. I would say it's all one personality.

WP: So what happened? You had a good run for a while, you won the belt in France and a few months later that was it.

RS: I guess they just wanted to make some changes. They told me at one point that we were going to really make the girls hot and really do something and bring in more. But you know as well as I do that that in wrestling, the tides turn. Things change from day to day

and so evidently they must have had some other ideas to go with at the time. They figured they'd just cut the girls loose.

WP: Do you think that women wrestling can flourish in this country? It seems to be doing well in Japan. But in this country, you've got the LPWA and then you've got oil and mud wrestling. Do you think with the proper promotion it can flourish?

RS: I think so. It's just going to take somebody. I don't understand because every single day people come up and say, "Why did they do that?" Because everybody enjoyed the ladies wrestling. It really makes no sense. But then again, McMahon did a nice thing for us, because when you're under contract up there, you can't work for anyone else but if he couldn't work us they might as well let us go. That way we can go somewhere else. So I can't blame the man for that. But I certainly hope somebody will bring it back.

WP: What about Abrams and the UWF? Do you think there's a seriousness about this?

RS: Yes, I hope the man does well. I hope he gives it a good shot. I always have the hope that any organization will work because it's not easy to round up all these people and have a good organization. But you've got to treat people right too. So I hope the best for him. I hope it all turns out well. It will just be another place for us to go.

WP: The days of Moolah running an office and contracting her girls are over?

RS: Over. It's out.

WP: Did that hurt the business?

RS: I was never involved with Moolah so I never really answered to Moolah at all. I wasn't trained by her. I didn't go through her at all. Actually, I was the first woman to not go through her and still get somewhere. She had the power to put the screws to you. She had the power that if she didn't want you there, you weren't there. I kind of broke in at a real opportune time, so I was able to bypass all that. I can't really comment a whole lot on that because I don't know exactly... everybody heard stories. I don't know exactly what happened.

WP: Many horror stories?

RS: Oh yeah. Personally I'm just glad I wasn't involved, but anytime you have anybody... I guess it had a little to do with the women. They figure they don't need those kind of problems. Get rid of them. There are so many people out there who want to be in that position and who would love to be in that position so why put up with some kind of problem like that? It's easy to say, "See ya later."

WP: What do you think about the future of the LPWA?

RS: Evidently they've been running for quite a while now. So they must be doing something right. I've never worked with that group. They called a few times, but I was always either on my way to Japan or somewhere else. So I was never able to really get with them on anything. Good luck to them too. The more that are out there, the more organizations out there, the more places we have to go. So you don't have to sit and starve.

WP: It's probably tough to get work at this point with so few promotions actively promoting ladies wrestling.

RS: Unfortunately.

WP: Speaking of Japan, you said you had taken a trip down to All Japan. From what people have said it's a whole different experience than anything in the United States.

RS: It was the best trip I ever made. I just had a ball. To see a whole different culture. As a matter of fact, I was talking about this to a friend last night, about Japan and how different it is. Now that you come home and you sit and you think, "God look what I went through. Look what I did." We were in a lot of small villages also. So you sleep on the floor. You take your shoes off when you walk in. Everybody goes to the same rest room. That was the only thing I found real difficult. But it was just a different way of life. So

you can either go over there and let it drive you crazy or have an open mind and just enjoy it. It can get to you, but if you keep an open mind. You get frustrated because they don't speak your language, you can get a little frustrated. But I found the whole thing just real pleasurable. I had a fabulous time.

WP: The fans are quite different.

RS: Whoo yeah! Well, it was funny because we would finish up, I'd finish my match and go back to the hotel and every single night, this went on for about a month. Every night I'd get a knock at the door and there were always fans bringing me presents or what have you. It was cute more than anything. But it wasn't too cute at four in the morning (knock) "Wockin' Wobin, Wockin' Wobin."

WP: Their perception of American wrestlers is that even though a lot of the Japanese wrestlers are better workers than you find in the United States, they're like, "Oh they're the Americans," and they are infatuated with them.

RS: Yeah. I don't know why that is. But they love Americans over there. They absolutely adore them. I found that pretty nice. They're really gracious people. I would go back in a second.

WP: Who did you enjoy working with the most there?

RS: If I could pronounce their names, I would tell you. One of the Bomb Angels was working there and one of their names in English is Gulliver. She was really, really good. She was pretty much the main girl and she trained all the new faces. She kept them in training every day, even when we are on the road. I would just be crawling into the arena and they'd be in there for hours, just training, working out.

WP: Also the prelim girls, don't they get there early and set up the ring?

RS: They do everything, everything. It was amazing. Even for us, they come around and carry your bags for you. I didn't like that, but you don't want to insult them. I told them, "That's okay, that's okay. I can carry my bag." I figured they had enough to do. They wait on you hand and foot. They don't eat until after you've been fed. That kind of thing. They were just so wonderful.

WP: Did you train differently while you were there?

RS: Oh yeah. I tried to find gyms to work out in, but ladies aren't allowed in the gyms. They're just for men. That's what I ran into. Somebody could tell me different, but we weren't allowed to go into these gyms at all. I find that kind of funny that we can share the same bathroom, but we can't go to the same gym. So when the facilities aren't available, you just do training. If you have to do it in your room, your hotel room, you do that. If it's just going out and taking a jog, you do that.

WP: You've worked against Madusa. She changed quite a bit from when she first broke in to when she got her experience in Japan. What kind of style does she dictate in the ring?

RS: Rambo.

WP: She's a crazy woman?

RS: She's Rambette. I wrestled her one time and I came out with four stitches in my head.

WP: A very intense woman?

RS: She is. It was a tough, hard match and it ended up in a draw. The time ran out I think. Otherwise, I don't know who would have killed each other first. I have a lot of respect for her. I had heard, you know, you hear different things about different people. I guess it's her training in Japan. She's really come a long way. If I meet her again, it would definitely be a match to see. It would be tough. I owe her about four stitches so I'm ready for the payback.

WP: So what are you doing right now?

RS: I guess it was about two months ago I took the title, the UWF title. Whenever they have shows running, I'm sure you'll be seeing me there. But, otherwise I pretty much travel the country; especially if a tour goes through the Bahamas, of course I'll go. But if it's in Iowa, I could pass. Nothing against Iowa, but I can be a little more selective now. So it's a lot easier on me, that's for sure.

WP: Comparing styles, whose the best in the family?

RS: I just want to put it this way: my father was a wrestler, Jake, Sam and me. Out of all of us, out of everyone of us, I'm the only one to ever hold a world title. So that just says it. I got two belts sitting here right now. Sam always joked around. He says, "I'm going to be the next world champion if Rockin' Robin would only sign the contract." I may take him up on it sometime.

WP: He's injured now?

RS: Yeah, he's injured now (Houston has since recovered). I'll let him get a little better. When he comes out of the traction.

WP: So what happened to him? He took a bad bump?

RS: Yeah, he fell pretty bad. Those are the breaks so to speak. Pardon the pun. You do get hurt. I remember a long time ago, I took a bad fall and my shoulder popped out. I dislocated my shoulder and I had to finish the match. It's wild to try to hit somebody and having to throw your arm because it doesn't move. I tried to pick my arm up and it didn't go anywhere. It happened four years ago.

WP: Do you want to go back to All Japan?

RS: I would love to. I would love to. As soon as another tour goes over, that they want some more girls over there, I'll be the first to go.

WP: Anything else you want to add?

RS: You two are about the cutest things I've seen here.

WP: We'll make sure that gets printed.

RS: Definitely keep that. I hope good things for the girls. The only problem that we're having is lack of work, hopefully things will look up.

WP: So what's the truth about Sherri?

RS: You ever see that cartoon with the Tazmanian Devil. That's about it. She's been around a long time. She gets in there, she knows what she's doing. She's the type of person you'd be really scared of because you don't know what's going through her mind. You can't read her at all.

WP: Do you think she's not being utilized properly? Do you think she should be in the ring?

RS: She should be in the ring, that's where her talent is. Uh well I guess (laughs). Just trying to get a rivalry going.

WP: What's it like on the road?

RS: You get to see a lot of things. It's beautiful out there if you get a chance to get out. We went to Europe a couple of times. For somebody my age to be able to travel the world like that, it's fabulous. Anytime anybody gets the chance to go somewhere and see something different, they should go.

WP: Are there any places you haven't gone to that you would like to go to?

RS: I haven't been to Germany, which I would like to go.

WP: Go work for Otto?

RS: Yeah. It took about 15 minutes before I could understand hello. I have talked to him and there's a chance of me going over sometime soon.

WP: It's good to get the experience.

RS: I think in the next year or two, the U.S. promotions will smarten up. They'll bring us back. There's too many people out there than want to see it. They want to seen the women and not GLOW. I've always wanted to do comedy, but that's not my speed. That's not my style.

WP: Did that kind of put a black mark on women's wrestling and set them back?

RS: Actually, that's what McMahon, that was his explanation to me. With the GLOW thing, they don't take women seriously, but I don't know if I could accept that reason because the WWF is so huge that he can blow away anybody of the screen. You have to retaliate with talent. Don't make that into women's wrestling.

WP: You have to invest the time and the talent.

RS: You sure do. I think they'll smarten up one of these days.

WP: We appreciate you taking the time out.

RS: No problem. For you anything.

A Game Of Tag

By - The Phantom Of The Ring

Tag team wrestling has been with us since roughly 1938, when the first tag match was staged in Houston, Texas, under the auspices of Morris Siegel. It remained relatively quiet through the forties, then exploded with the advent of television in the fifties. The strange thing about tag wrestling is that the public always seemed to tolerated it as a necessary gimmick. An exception, almost, to the highly individual concept of wrestling and a concept that never had a counterpart in the world of amateur wrestling, with which the public looked at as an argument for the validity of professional wrestling

In rating the top ten teams of all time, we must throw certain standards out the window, for tag wrestling is really a separate animal from individual matches. Showmanship counts as much, is not even more, than ability alone. The gimmick is much more important in the world of tag team wrestling, because tag teams have always been a harder draw with the public. Paul Boesch once said that he couldn't for the life of him figure out the public's attitude towards tag team wrestling. On one hand, a team may be extremely popular with the public, such as the Redheads were in Houston (Billy "Red" Lyons and Red Bastein), but when they were on top of a card versus the Blackjacks, the public stayed away in droves. The paying customers accepted tag matches, as long as they were supporting matches.

So here are my choices for the top ten tag teams of all time. I base my selections on equal parts talent, strength of showmanship/gimmick and the impact they had on the fans (both local and nationwide) at the time. Enjoy.

1) The Kangaroos (Al Costello & Roy Heffernan) • Without a doubt the greatest tag team so far. Both were superb tag wrestlers who had ability and a strong gimmick. The Australian gizmo of bush hats and boomerangs made them instantly recognizable among wrestling fans and they were equally adept at playing either heels or babyfaces. Costello was known as one of the best technical wrestlers of his time. Heffernan was also known as a strong technician, but not as proficient as Costello. However, neither could

carve out a strong niche as a single's wrestler. Together, however, they were headliners; their talents blending together perfectly as a team. After Heffernan left the team to return to Australia in 1966, Costello employed a number of partners in the Kangaroos, but without the success he had with Heffernan. The Kangaroos were especially hot in the Northeast during the early sixties when they had Red Berry fronting for them. Between Berry's mouth and cane and the souvenir paper boomerangs they handed out at every match, they were the darlings of the kiddie set.

2) Kenji Shibuya & Mr. Saito • The quintessential heel tag team, dominated California wrestling during the late sixties and early seventies. Shibuya was a journeyman heel who prospered before in teams, most notably with Duke Keomuka in the early sixties. Saito was an Olympic star looking to break out of the prelim ranks. Together they would wreak havoc. They were seen as dangerous and unstoppable, though neither was physically intimidating. Shibuya was about 5'6" and Saito lacked the bulk he has today. Nevertheless, they parlayed the Japanese stereotype into wrestling history. Further, they were talented, which made them even more formidable in the eyes of the fans. There were many other Japanese teams, but none made the dent these two did.

3) Eddie & Jerry Graham • True legends in the history of wrestling and the first "brother" team to make it big, they were the terrors of the Northeastern U.S. during the late fifties and early sixties. Eddie was small and nasty, while Jerry was big and nasty. The bleached blonde hair and slight resemblance, combined with their heel tactics into a heel persona that has still not been equalled, though not for lack of imitation. The Freebirds, Valiant Brothers and the current Beverly Brothers all owe much to the Grahams. They were proficient in all areas of the game, from heel tactics to interviews. Their interviews alone were considered classics of ballyhoo even by the toughest wrestling standards.

4) The Anderson Brothers (Ole & Gene) • The Carolinas territory of the Crockett family was noted for many excellent tag teams over the years, but none were better than Gene and Ole Anderson, the Minnesota Wrecking Crew. Though not the original Anderson Brothers combination (Gene and Lars were the original), Gene and Ole were a better team. They employed a staid heel style in the ring marked by concentrating on either the opponent's left arm or left leg and working towards a submission hammerlock or leglock. They always did a great interview and had enough size and talent to bring fans out as they wrestled against some of the top tag talent in the country. Facing such teams as Hawk and Hanson, the Scotts (George and Sandy), Becker and Weaver, Flair and Valentine, and McDaniel and Jones, the Andersons always gave a good account of themselves and always left the fans wondering just when they would truly get their's.

5) Dory & Terry Funk • Quite a high ranking considering that the Funks always concentrated on individual honors first and teaming second. Still, it is a tribute to their abilities as great wrestlers that they could submerge individual styles into a formidable tag team. It was something that any other number of brother teams were not able to do. Such teams as the Briscos and the Von Erichs (Kerry and Kevin) could never quite overcome their individuality to be seen as a team. The Funks could be seen at the same time as great individuals and a great team.

6) The Infernos • The best masked tag team of all time and one that has seen many incarnations and imitations over the years. Frank Caine and Rocky Smith were two prelim wrestlers with similar builds. In individual competition they were nothing short of quite ordinary. But, put hood on them and give them J.C. Dykes as a manager and you have one of the greatest teams in history. They pulled every trick from illegal switches (the first to make that particular gimmick work - mainly because of the masks) to the phony clubfoot (with a load in it, of course) to throwing fire. Those who saw them in their prime still remember them fondly today.

7) George and Sandy Scott • Another of the great teams produced in the Carolinas area during the sixties. Very smooth combination, relying on aerial maneuvers and the strength of the heel team to get over with the fans. While the Scotts matched up well against other babyface teams such as Weaver and Becker or Nelson Royal and Tex McKensie, it was against the heels that they really had a chance to shine. Their matches with the Andersons (both sets) and the Masked Assassins in Georgia were classics that got them noticed by wrestling media nationwide. Injuries and the refusal to tour caused them to go stale all too quickly, but at their peak, they were really something to see.

8) The Bruiser & The Crusher • Billed as "the world's most dangerous tag team," they usually managed to live up to their billing, providing entertainment in an otherwise lackluster AWA tag field during the sixties. Not the greatest wrestlers, they often resorted to simply brawling and mugging, but what wrestling fan in the Midwest doesn't mention them with a certain amount of awe? Those who were lucky enough to see them at their peak talk with reverence; those who weren't lucky enough often speak with longing.

9) The Valiant Brothers (Jimmy & Johnny) • It isn't often that a team comes along so charismatic that they turn a dull situation into something exciting, but that's just what the Valiants did in the WWF during the mid-seventies. The wrestling scene in the WWF during the early seventies had grown stale. Bruno Sammartino had just captured the championship from Stan Stasiak, ending Pedro Morales' rather dull reign, but the tag situation was in worse shape. The last tag champs of any note whatsoever were Rene Goulet and Karl Gotch in 1971. Since then, the wrestling fans in the WWF had to suffer through the likes of King Curtis and Baron Siccluna, King Curtis and Tarzan Tyler, Tanaka and Fuji, Tony Garea and Dean Ho, and Garea and Haystacks Calhoun. The Valiants were like a breath of fresh air in this smoke filled room. They were brash and arrogant; their likes had not been seen in this area since the departure of Eddie and Jerry Graham. They also made Lou Albano into a credible manager instead of merely a front. He adopted their style and it enabled him to further develop his "Captain Lou" persona. I'll always have a soft spot in my heart for the Valiants.

10) Ric Flair & Greg Valentine • Here we ask the same questions we asked of the Funks: could two great individual wrestlers jell into a decent team? Again, the answer is yes. The truly amazing thing about Flair and Valentine is that when they teamed, they worked together so well, one would swear they'd been teaming for years. Although you wouldn't know it to look at him now, Valentine was a great worker in his salad days (long before his current beer and pizza days of today). Flair is so versatile a worker that he could even make partner like Andre the Giant look credible. It was hard with all the great tag teams in the Carolinas during that time to make a splash, but Flair and Valentine ended up clearing the pool.

10) (Tie) Ray Stevens & Pat Patterson • No way can one leave these two off any list of tag team greats. Patterson is one for the greatest tag wrestlers of all time (a theme I shall develop in a future column). He teamed with Stevens at a point in time when the shine had begun to wear off Stevens' single's career in San Francisco and he had begun to grow stale. They mowed over all opposition, broke up, feuded when Stevens went babyface, then buried the hatchet and teamed up to feud with Shibuya and Saito. They later went to the AWA and wrestled many memorable matches there, even though both had seen their best days in San Francisco. One can hate them or like them, but one can't forget them.

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